

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 198326

FOLLOWING REPEAT NEW DELHI 11258 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
DACCA ISLAMABAD LONDON RANGOON BOMBAY CALCUTTA
HONG KONG MADRAS PEKING CINCPAC MOSCOW 20 AUGUST.

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 11258

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, IN, BG
SUBJ: INDIAN AND THE BANGLADESH COUP

REF: NEW DELHI 11065

SUMMARY: MRS. GANDHI AND INDIANS GENERALLY ARE VERY MUCH UPSET BY
THE COUP IN BANGLADESH. CALLED INTO QUESTION IS INDIA'S CONSIDER-
ABLE INVESTMENT IN THE FORMATION OF BANGLADESH AND MUJIB'S AS-
SUMPTION OF POWER. HIS GOVERNMENT WAS A KNOWN QUANTITY WHICH GEN-
ERALLY FOLLOWED A FOREIGN POLICY LINE FAVORABLE TO INDIA. THE GOI
SEES THE COUP AS PRESENTING BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC
CHALLENGES. THERE ARE NO PRESENT SIGNS THAT THE GOI WILL MOVE IN
ANTICIPATION OF A DETERIORATION OF ITS INTERESTS IN BANGLADESH.
FIGHTING WITHIN BANGLADESH OR AN EXODUS OF REFUGEES COULD
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PROMPT THE GOI TO INTERVENE MILITARILY. MRS. GANDHI'S SUPPORTERS
POINT TO THE BANGLADESH CASE AS JUSTIFYING THE NEED FOR THE
STRONG ACTION TAKEN IN PROCLAIMING THE STATE OF EMERGENCY. HER
CRITICS DRAW THE OPPOSITE LESSON FROM MUJIB'S FATE. WITH THE POS-

SIBLE EXCEPTION OF INCREASING THE PRIME MINISTER'S PERSONAL SECURITY, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE COUP WILL INSPIRE HER TO TAKE ANY SPECIFIC DOMESTIC MEASURES. THE GOI WILL PREFER INITIALLY TO TRY TO WORK OUT A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW GOB. IT IS WATCHING THE SITUATION THERE CLOSELY. THE GOI, HOWEVER, WILL PROBABLY NOT TOLERATE A HOSTILE BANGLADESH OR ONE WITH RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN OR CHINA WHICH INDIA MAY FIND THREATENING. INTERVENTION IS AN OPTION, PARTICULARLY IF THERE IS A LEADER WITH WHOM THE GOI COULD WORK CLOSELY. THUS FAR, DESPITE SOME NEWSPAPER RHETORIC, THERE IS NO EVIDENCE OF THE KIND OF BUILD-UP OF POPULAR INDIAN SENTIMENT THAT WOULD PRECEDE INDIAN INTERVENTION IN BANGLADESH.

1. WE HAVE HEARD THE STORY THAT SOMETIME SHORTLY BEFORE MRS. GANDHI DELIVERED HER INDEPENDENCE DAY SPEECH ON AUGUST 15 SHE LEARNED OF THE COUP IN BANGLADESH. MANY HERE SAW IN HER SOMEWHAT UNEVEN DELIVERY SIGNS OF HER CONCERN FOR WHAT HAD HAPPENED NEXT DOOR. WHETHER OR NOT THIS IS BASELESS CONJECTURE, OBSERVERS HERE, INCLUDING DIPLOMATS AT THE BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSION IN DELHI, ARE IN NO DOUBT THAT THE GOI AND INDIANS GENERALLY ARE VERY MUCH CONCERNED BY THE OVERTHROW OF MUJIB.

2. THE COUP, WHICH APPARENTLY CAME AS A COMPLETE SURPRISE TO THE INDIANS (SURPRISING IN VIEW OF INDIAN INTELLIGENCE RESOURCES, ALTHOUGH KNOWLEDGE OF GENERAL COUP PLOTTING OVER THE LAST EIGHT MONTHS WAS CERTAINLY KNOWN TO THE GOI), CALLS INTO QUESTION INDIA'S, AND MRS. GANDHI'S, VERY SUBSTANTIAL INVESTMENT IN THE FORMATION OF THE BANGLADESH STATE AND MUJIB'S ASSUMPTION OF POWER. WHILE THE GOB UNDER MUJIB DEFENDED BANGLADESH INTERESTS WHERE THEY CONFLICTED WITH INDIAN INTERESTS, HIS GOVERNMENT WAS A KNOWN QUANTITY WHICH GENERALLY WAS SEEN AS FOLLOWING A FOREIGN POLICY LINE FAVORABLE TO INDIA. THAT THE GOI IS CONCERNED IS ADDITIONALLY INDICATED BY THE STUDIED INDIFFERENCE OF SENIOR INDIAN OFFICIAL OVER THE COUP IN BANGLADESH. FOREIGN SECRETARY KEWAL SINGH TREATED THE AMBASSADOR TO THIS POSTURING ON AUGUST 15, AND THE VISITING NEPALESE FOREIGN MINISTER ENJOYED THE SAME PERFORMANCE BY THE SENIOR OFFICIALS WHOM HE MET.

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3. THE GOI PROBABLY SEES THE BANGLADESH COUP AS PRESENTING BOTH INTERNATIONAL AND DOMESTIC CHALLENGES TO IT. ON THE INTERNATIONAL SIDE, THE INDIANS MAY BE CONCERNED THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT (A) WILL GIVE VENT TO THE ANTI-INDIAN FEELINGS BELIEVED PREVALENT IN ALL STRATA OF BANGLADESH SOCIETY, (B) WILL STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AT THE EXPENSE OF ITS FRIENDSHIP WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY (C) WILL MOVE NOT ONLY TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND CHINA BUT PERHAPS GIVE THEM GREATER WEIGHT THAN RELATIONS WITH INDIA. ON THE DOMESTIC SIDE, THE GOI ALMOST CERTAINLY FEARS THE POSSIBILITY OF A MASS EXODUS OF REFUGEES FROM BANGLADESH INTO

INDIA AND IN GENERAL IS WORRIED ABOUT THE TREATMENT OF HINDUS IN BANGLADESH. IN ADDITION, THE GOI MIGHT BE CONCERNED THAT TRIBAL INSURGENTS IN THE NORTHEAST MIGHT AGAIN RECEIVE ENCOURAGEMENT, REFUGE AND ARMS THROUGH BANGLADESH.

4. AT PRESENT WE SEE NO SIGNS THAT INDIA WILL INTERVENE MILITARILY IN ANTICIPATION REPEAT ANTICIPATION OF A DETERIORATION OF ANY OF THE ABOVE INTERESTS. OBSERVERS HERE AGREE THAT THE DEATH OF MUJIB CONSIDERABLY REDUCED THE LIKELIHOOD OF INDIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE COUP. TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, THE BORDER BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES IS BELIEVED TO BE "SEALED" AND A HIGHER LEVEL OF MILITARY ALERT IN THE EASTERN MILITARY SECTOR IS PRESUMED TO BE IN EFFECT. AN OUTBREAK OF FIGHTING WITHIN BANGLADESH, OR AN EXODUS OF HINDU REFUGEES COULD, HOWEVER, PROVIDE THE GOI A CAUSE FOR INTERVENING MILITAILY. AS INDICATED IN THE GOI'S STATEMENT FOLLOWING THE MEETING BETWEEN THE BANGLADESH HIGH COMMISSIONER AND THE FOREIGN SECRETARY AUGUST 19 (NEW DELHI 11219), THE GOI IS CONSIDERABLY RELIEVED THAT BANGLADESH IS MAINUINING ITS SECULAR CHARACTER, AT LEAST NOMINALLY, BY NOT CHANGING ITS NAME.

5. THE TWO PRINCIPAL OUTSTANDING ISSUES BETWEEN INDIA AND BANGLADESH ARE THE FARAKKA BARRAGE AND THE MARITIME BOUNDARY. ON AUGUST 19 THE INDIANS ANNOUNCED THAT THE PRESENT DISTRIBUTION OF WATER THROUGH THE FARAKKA BARRAGE IS HAVING A SALUTARY EFFECT ON CALCUTTA PORT, AND WE STRONGLY SUSPECT THAT THIS WAS DESIGNED TO TAKE SOME PRESSURES OFF OF THIS ISSUE. PRIOR TO THE COUP THERE APPARENTLY WAS SOME MOVEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS ON THE CONFIDENTIAL

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MARITIME BOUNDARY ISSUE. FURTHER PROGRESS WILL BE A GOOD INDICATOR TO EACH GOVERNMENT OF THE INTENTIONS OF THE OTHER.

6. THERE IS WIDESPREAD POPULAR BELIEF THROUGHOUT INDIA THAT THE USG MAY HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE OVERTHROW OF MUJIB. WHILE THE GOI HAS NOT ITSELF GIVEN VOICE TO THIS ACCUSATION, IT HAS ALLOWED PUBLIC MEEGINGS TO BE HELD AT WHICH THIS ALLEGATION WAS VOCIFEROUSLY MADE AND HAS FURTHER ALLOWED REPORTS OF THESE MEETINGS TO BE PUBLISHED WIDELY IN THE PRESS. WE WILL WATCH CAREFULLY TO SEE WHETHER OUR PROTESTS OF THIS HERE IN DELHI AND BY DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY UBS IN WASHINGTON HAVE ANY EFFECT. MRS. GANDHI'S LOYALISTS WILL USE THE BANGLADESH COUP AS A FURTHER JUSTIFICATION FOR THE STATE OF EMERGENCY WHICH, IT IS NOW SAID, CAME NONE TOO SOON. HOSE CRITICAL OF HER WILL POINT TO MUJIB AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE FATE OF DICTATORS.

7. THERE IS SOME SPECULATION HERE THAT THE BANGLADESH COUP MAY PROMPT MRS. GANDHI TO EITHER SLOW DOWN HER POLITICAL-SOCIO-ECONOMIC "REVOLUTION" OR TO INTENSIFY AUTHORITATIAN CONTROLS. WE SUSPECT NEITHER SPECULATION HAS ANY FOUNDATION, AND DOUBT THAT ANY NEW ACTIONS (OTHER THAN POSSIBLY INCREASING EVEN FURTHER SE-

CURITY AROUND THE PRIME MINISTER HERSELF) WHICH MAY BE TAKEN BY MRS. GANDHI DOMESTICALLY WILL BE DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE BENGALADESH COUP.

8. WE BELIEVE INDIA WILL PREFER INITIALLY TO TRY TO WORK OUT A GOOD RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NEW BANGLADESH AUTHORITIES, ONE WHICH FROM THE INDIAN POINT OF VIEW WOULD IDEALLY BE VERY SIMILAR TO THAT WITH MUJIB. THE GOI, WE THINK, WILL PREFER TO SIT TIGHT AND WAIT AND SEE WHAT THE NEW BANGALI AUTHORITIES DO. THE GOI, HOWEVER, WILL PROBABLY NOT TOLERATE A HOSTILE BANGLADESH NEXT TO IT, OR ONE WITH RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN OR CHINA WHICH INDIA MAY FIND THREATENING. INTERVENTION IS ALWAYS AN OPTION, PARTICULARLY IF THE INDIANS CAN FOCUS ON A POTENTIAL REPLACEMENT LEADER WITH WHOM THEY BELIEVE THEY CAN WORK CLOSELY. POPULAR SENTIMENT ON THIS ISSUE COULD BE WORKED UP SWIFTLY AND EFFECTIVELY WITHIN INDIA AND INDEED, WE WOULD EXPECT TO SEE EVIDENCE OF THIS PRIOR TO ANY INDIANINTERVENTIONIST ACTION, MILITARY OR "DESTABILIZING". THUS FAR, DESPITE SOME FLORID PROSE IN A FEW SCATTERED PAPERS, WE DO NOT SEE EVIDENCE OF THIS.

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